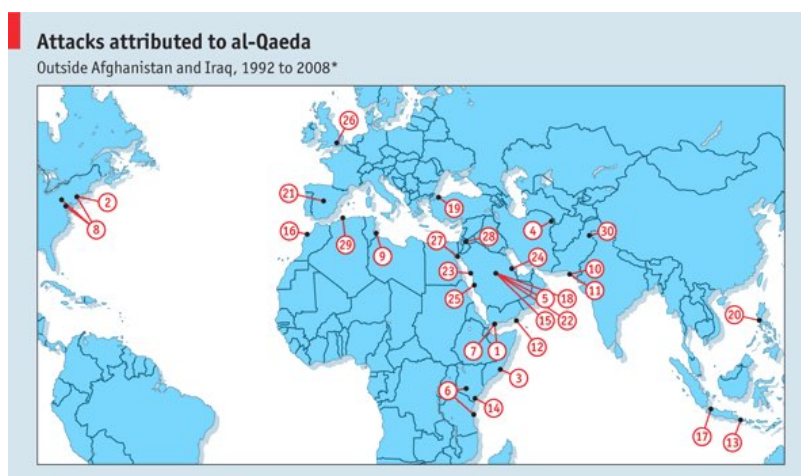


Islamophobia

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In September 11, 2001, at the morning, the United States began a new day as regular. Nothing had been distinctive, adults in their works and children in their schools, until that breaking news, America was attacked by anonymous group. Manhattan World Trade Center collapsed by two hijacked planes. The pentagon were attacked with one plane and caused 184 killed people. Americans were extremely shocked and witnessing an incident that had not been happened earlier, it was a miserable day for the United States. Al Qaeda (a militant Islamic fundamentalist group) claimed the responsibility of the attack. 9\11 was a turning points for Muslims in the western world, muslims knew that they were starting new era called 'post 9\11 attacks'. The terrorist incident was a ground zero for a western activity named Islamophobia which means (a fear of Islam). Many westerners started investigating about Islam and trying to find out the relationship between Islamic teachings and terrorism. The issue were controversial among people in the west which is due to the variety of islamic perspectives of interpreting Islam. As a matter of fact, I have watched many interviews, documentaries and social experiments about Islamophobia. My interest in the topic began in 2013 when the increase of the issue became terribly sharp. In order to comprehend the Islamophobia, I made an online survey about Islamophobia, and I got 62 responses form Muslims and non-Muslims. The survey shows that there are two main factors contribute to the rise of Islamophobia: terrorist attacks from radical islamic groups and misconceptions about Islam.



(Figure 1; Attacks attributed to al Qaeda 1992 to 2008)

Islamic Extremists attacks:

The last decade witnessed a number of acts of terrorism that were claimed by one of the major Islamic terrorist groups, 'Al Qaeda'. The ghost of Al Qaeda causes the increase of Islamophobia in the west. Al Qaeda has committed many attacks in different places in the world as it is shown in Figure 1. In addition, the new radical Islamic group ISIS (Islamic States of Iraq and Syria), contributes to the rise of Islamophobia in the west. Radical Islamic groups justify their actions by indicating Quranic teachings and Muhammed's sayings which cause a misconception for those who have never heard about Islam. However, the ideology of ISIS is extremely rejected among Islamic governments and societies around the world. In fact, Al Qaeda and ISIS follow an ideology that has a root in Islamic history, known group called in Arabic ' **Al Kharijite**'. **Ibn Taymiyyah**, one of the greatest Islamic scholars, says in his book '**Majmu' Al-Fatawa**' "The Kharijite sect was the first to declare Muslims to be unbelievers because of their sins. They charged as unbelievers whoever disagreed with their innovations and they made lawful the spilling of blood and the taking of wealth. This is the condition of the people of innovation, that they invent some religious innovation and then they excom-

municate whoever disagrees with them concerning it. Rather, the people of the Sunnah and the community follow the Book and the Sunnah and they obey Allah and His Messenger and follow the truth. They have mercy upon the creation.” Moreover, Abu Amina Elise, Muslim American author indicates that “The Kharijite ideology is based upon the following evil tenets: Declaring Muslims to be unbelievers, rejecting lawful obedience to the rulers and Justifying violence against Muslims and innocent people.”

The attack of 9\11 showed the radical islamic terrorists as in the front row of the threats and the challenges of the western world. Consequently, The Anti-Islamism movement against Muslims was a reaction to the terrorist incidents, but according to a statistic that was published by the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), showing the terrorist attacks in the United States from 1980 to 2005, the attacks that were done by islamic extremists represent just 6%. Furthermore, David Schanzer, an associate professor in Duke's Sanford School of Public Policy and director of the Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security says "Muslim-American organizations and the vast majority of individuals that we interviewed firmly reject the radical extremist ideology that justifies the use of violence to achieve political ends." Many Islamic organizations in the west try to promote the real image of islam and clarify the misconceptions, by conferences and Interfaith dialogues.

Misconceptions About Islam:

As it is mentioned, the issue of radical islamic extremism causes many misconceptions about islam. Last year there was a big Islamophobia campaign in several cities in the United States. In the most most of public buses, an Islamophobia advertisements were found with a verse from Quran says “when ye meet the Unbelievers, smite at their

necks (47:4).” For non-Muslims, the verse seems encouraging to violence and hatefulness. Muslims know that the verse had been revealed to Muhammed for special limited situations during the Muslims war with “Quraish,” the most dangerous enemy for Muslims during the beginning of Islamic history. Basically, it was Cherry-picking which is considered as a crucial reason for the misconceptions. In fact the Quran asks Muslims in different verses to treat non-Muslims, especially ‘People of the Book’ Christians and Jews, in the most kindly manner.

The issue of women in Islam have an initial place in the media. One of the main factors is that people can not distinguish between a culture for a certain place and the Islamic teachings. For instance, ‘Taliban’ (a fundamentalist group) has a bad history with treating women in the 1990s. Afghani women pictures are widely found in the Islamophobia advertisements. According to the Article in Amnesty (international human’s rights organization), published in October 2013 about women’s rights in Afghanistan, Taliban territory can be regarded as one of the inadequate places for women to live. The article indicates some restrictions for Afghani women under Taliban regime, such as banning from going to school or studying, being involved in politics and working. Taliban claims that their actions are due to the Islamic teachings, but back in the history, at the age of the prophet Muhammed, women have a right to learn, work and even vote in political issues. For instance, After the death of Abu baker Assidiek, the first successor of the prophet Muhammed, all women in Madinah, Muhammed’s city, were able to vote for the second successor. Moreover, ‘Aisha’, Muhammed’s wife, was one of the greatest scholars, and Muslims used to ask her about Islam, history and Arabic literature.

Misunderstanding of certain verses in the Quran lead to intensifying anti-islamism by many different feminist groups. Quran indicates women rights in different verses. One of the Quranic chapters called in Arabic '**Annese**' which means women. For example, Allah says "And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect. In terms of Muhammed's sayings, "The one who is the most perfect in faith among the believers is he who has the best moral character among them; and the best among you are those who are the best of you (in treatment) to their wives."

The future of Islamophobia:

All in all, there are two crucial factors cause the rise of Islamophobia in the west: fundamentalist islamic groups and misunderstandings about Islam. The role of Muslims in the west is significant to find a peaceful end of Islamophobia, the role of them is to show how Islamic traditions make them liberated and civilized enough to be contributing. Muslims have a rich experience in the history with excelling in the scientific advancements. There are many Muslim scientists who contributed in many different kinds of sciences and arts, such as **Ibn Sina** in philosophy and medicine, Abu baker **Al-Razi** in chemistry, **Ibn Khaldun** in sociology and history, and **Al-Kindi** in astronomy and mathematics. The peaceful end of Islamophobia can be found through communications between people from different faiths and backgrounds as the Quran says ""O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians): Come to a word that is just between us and you, that we worship none but Allah, and that we associate no partners with Him, and that none of us shall take others as lords besides Allah."

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